

## SAFR testimony on HB 5143

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, my name is Brad Benzing and I am here today representing the members of the Shooters Alliance for Firearms Rights (SAFR). I would like to speak today in favor of the passage of HB 5143. This Bill is important to the security of every person who lives, works or vacations in Michigan. Simply stated, this Bill is about protecting oneself and the people that are important to you. Currently, Michigan law provides that should a person be attacked by a criminal, they must first try to get away from their attacker before attempting to defend themselves. A college softball team member pumping gas into her car on the way back from a game, an elderly citizen visiting his late wife's grave or a farmer gathering eggs from her hen house all are charged with first trying to run away from a criminal who attacks them as they peacefully go about their lives. With the passage of HB 5143, those individuals, who very likely are weaker, slower and otherwise at a disadvantage may use whatever force available to them to repel their attacker. That force could be a baseball bat in the hands of the college student, a cane wielded by the aging veteran or a shovel brandished by the farmer.

Opponents of this legislation would have you believe that this Bill is about the unrestricted use of force towards other people. That is a far cry from this Bill's purpose or reality. What this Bill will do is allow Michigan's citizens to defend themselves should they come under attack. H.B. 5143 allows for the use of "like force" up to and including deadly force to repel an attacker. Further, it protects the same citizens from criminal prosecution or civil litigation for using such force. Several years ago, when I took my training in order to renew the concealed weapon permit I have held for over 20 years, the instructor impressed upon the class the seriousness of carrying a firearm for self defense. He made it very clear that should the students ever be required to use their firearm, even if they were completely legally justified in doing so, they would likely be sued by their attacker or their attacker's estate. This warning hangs over the head of anyone in Michigan who uses force to defend themselves, whether that force is baseball bat, cane, shovel or firearm.

Legislation similar to this Bill has been already passed by the legislatures of 7 other states. Those states are Florida, Alabama, Indiana, Mississippi, South Dakota, Georgia and Idaho. The Bills in the latter two states are awaiting their governor's signature.

Michigan has in excess of 130,000 citizens who have been licensed by the state to carry a firearm after undergoing proper training and background checks. In the 5 years since legislation was passed allowing law abiding citizens to obtain permits to carry concealed firearms, the record of those citizens has been exemplary. Neglect of the responsibility entrusted to those permit holders has been statistically insignificant. There is no reason to believe 5 years hence that there will have been more problems with this Bill than there have been with Shall Issue.

Those who oppose this legislation might make better use of their time advocating the authorization of more self defense options for Michigan's citizens. Forty five states allow citizens to carry self defense pepper spray in concentrations greater than that

allowed in Michigan. Forty two states allow properly trained citizens to carry Tasers. Many states authorize other, less than lethal methods of self defense for their residents such as ASP batons. However, those less than lethal options are not available to those of us living in Michigan. Our only choices are doing nothing to fend off an attacker or to use deadly force. A recent FoxNews.com news story on self defense stated that people who fight back against an attacker have a better chance of escaping serious injury or rape than those who respond passively towards the offender. H.B. 5143 will empower people to be able to do just that. Further, it will protect them from criminal prosecution or civil liability for doing so. I urge your prompt passage of this legislation.

Thank You.

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